42. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 40, wherein said atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence is Hath1.

43. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 40, wherein said delivery comprises injecting into an inner ear a therapeutically effective amount of an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence.

44. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 40, wherein said nucleic acid sequence is delivered by a delivery vehicle.

45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 44 wherein said delivery vehicle is selected from the group consisting of an adenoviral vector, a retroviral vector, an adeno-associated viral vector, a plasmid, a liposome, [a peptide,] a lipid, [a carbohydrate] and a combination thereof.

46. (Original) The method of claim 44, wherein said delivery vehicle is selected from the group consisting of a viral vector or a non-viral vector.

47. (Cancel)

48. (Previously Amended) The method of claim 40, wherein said cell contains an alteration in an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence.

49-111. (Previously Cancelled)

112. (Previously Amended) A composition comprising an *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence in combination with a delivery vehicle, wherein said delivery vehicle results in delivery of a therapeutically effective amount of *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence into a cell, and wherein said *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence encodes a polypeptide that has hair cell generating activity, has at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:58, and comprises at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:70.

113. (Previously Amended) The composition of claim 112, wherein said delivery vehicle comprises a vector that expresses an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence in an animal cell.

114. (Previously Amended) The composition of claim 113, wherein said vector is selected from the group consisting of a viral vector, a plasmid, or a combination thereof.

115. (Cancel)

116. (Cancel)

117. (Original) The composition of claim 112 wherein said atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence is operatively linked to nucleic acid sequence encoding a protein transduction domain.

118. (Original) The composition of claim 112, wherein said atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence is Hath1.

119. (Original) The composition of claim 112, wherein said atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence is Math1.

120. (Previously Cancelled)

121. (Previously Amended) A nucleic acid sequence encoding a fusion protein comprising an *atonal*-associated amino acid sequence or fragment thereof and a desired amino acid sequence, wherein said *atonal*-associated nucleic acid sequence encodes a polypeptide that has hair cell generating activity, has at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:58, and comprises at least about 80% identity to SEQ ID NO:70.

122. (Previously Cancelled)

123. (Previously Amended) The composition of claim 112, wherein the composition further comprises an additional nucleic acid sequence that is not an atonal-associated nucleic acid sequence.

124. (Previously Added and Currently Amended) The composition of claim 112, wherein said delivery vehicle is a liposome, [a peptide,] a lipid, [a carbohydrate,] or a combination thereof.